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REVIEWS

An American Town: A Sociological Study. By JAMES M. WILLIAMS, A.B., B.D. New York: Privately printed, 1906. Pp. 251.

This monograph is the first of two volumes apparently constituting the doctor's dissertation of the author who, receiving his A.B. from Brown University in 1898 and his B.D. from Union Theological Seminary in 1901, was a graduate student at Columbia University during the years 1899 to 1902. The obligation to Professor Giddings expressed in the preface appears constantly throughout the book which follows in many respects the method and terminology of his *Inductive Sociology*.

To regard this study, however, as merely a filling out of a prescribed schedule, the work of a census taker with his printed forms, would be to do it grave injustice. It is a painstaking, intelligent, and extremely suggestive piece of scholarly work, undertaken with the conviction that "what sociology most needs is *field* work," and that "the statistical method cannot get far unless used by the skilful *field worker*."

The fact that the author has spent the last three years in the study of small communities east and west in itself inspires confidence in the good faith at least with which he has undertaken his task.

An American Town analyzes and interprets the life, economic, political, social, and cultural of an unnamed but identifiable town in the "hop-belt" of New York from a settlement in 1792 up to the year 1900. This period is divided at the year 1875 into two parts, to each of which certain distinguishable characteristics are ascribed. The text is supplemented by twenty-one statistical tables and seventeen graphic charts based upon prices of hops, growth of population, journeys of inhabitants, building of houses, expenditures of churches for music and for missions, relief of the poor, extension of credit by merchants, numbers of students away from home at school and college, and many other facts of varying definiteness and significance. The reader cannot fail to be impressed by the skill, patience, and conscientiousness with which the available data have been

marshaled, as well as by the general caution with which they have been interpreted.

The basal thesis of the study is the pervasive influence in every activity, custom, and attitude of the community of its chief economic resource—the hop crop. In almost every graphic chart the “hop curve” appears in correlation with some other plotted series of facts. Social entertainments, credit, poor relief, expensive journeys, children away at school, church music, and mission collections, tend to respond sympathetically to the “hop curve.” Even when at first glance a new curve seems recalcitrant, the author points out—usually convincingly, sometimes only plausibly—that the apparent variation is due to influences initiated by the high price of hops but thereafter perpetuating themselves and only slightly affected by prosperity or depression.

The effects of economic changes and the increase of communication both within the community and with the larger world outside, upon social pleasures, church life, social classification, moral standards, and personal ideals are discussed with keen insight and discrimination. The analysis of motives, if it falls short of demonstration, is always subtle and ingenious. The later chapters contain many disputable theses upon several of which further light is promised in the second volume.

The concept of selection is an important clue to the whole study. Land, village, type of industry, is each treated as a selective agency. Thus early independent agriculture selects persistence, while later, more complex production selects sagacity. Country society sympathetically selects the hearty, jovial, physically active type; the town, the quiet, refined, and conventional person. Social life, church activities, types of ministers, moral standards, etc., are all interpreted in terms of selection. For the traditional terms “fitted,” “selected,” “surviving,” and the like the author proposed a technical use of *preferred*, *esteemed*, *approved*, and *chosen* to describe various kinds and degrees of social selection.

Although written in a somewhat technical style this study is eminently readable and is made vivid by constant quotation of the racy phrases and homely philosophy of the people themselves. It is to be hoped that out of these two volumes a work for popular use will be prepared. It would prove of great value to ministers, social workers, and intelligent persons generally. In such an edition care should be taken to place directly beneath each chart a clear

explanation. The difficulty of using the descriptions in the text—and often on another page—is irritating as well as baffling to the reader.

On the whole Mr. Williams is to be heartily congratulated on a piece of work which opens up new possibilities in the intensive study of localities, and proves that monographic work of this kind is to be of prime importance to sociology.

GEORGE E. VINCENT

Life and Death: A Study in Biology. By DR. E. TEICHMANN.
Translated by A. M. SIMONS. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr
Co., 1906. Pp. 158.

This small volume in the "Library of Science for Workers" is a clear and interesting account of the most fundamental life-phenomena, and represents what may be called the "missing link" in the modern system of education. It is an attempt to bring the results of scientific pursuit to the popular mind in a generalized form. Huxley did it successfully, and the magazines are doing the same thing. But in general the scientist is so intensively engaged that he will not present his findings in a generalized form, and they leak out as best they may. In the industrial pursuits, where money is involved, there is a class of specialists engaged in carrying scientific results over into practice. But the social interests are not so well served, and in consequence there is a sharp break between consciousness of the world at large and the consciousness of the scientific world. We are glad to welcome a book which makes intelligence more general and consciousness more homogeneous.

W. I. THOMAS

Efficiency and Relief. By E. T. DEVINE. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1906. Pp. 45.

The subtitle of this lecture, with which Dr. Devine began his work as Schiff professor of social economy in Columbia University, expresses the firm and clear conception of the scholar in practical life, "a programme of social work." The mere "practical man" has no principles and no programme, and the mere "theorist" has a scheme which has no relation to reality. In this volume a part of the problem of philanthropy is stated, to increase industrial